

A Review of
Predators: Who They Are and How to Stop Them

By

Laura A. Rapp & Deeanna M. Button
University of Delaware

Book: *Predators: Who They Are and How to Stop Them*

Authors: Gregory M. Cooper & Marvin R. King

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Predators is a unique contribution because it discusses specific strategies to reduce the likelihood of victimization. This book is a collection of strategies gleaned from the authors' experience as law enforcement officers; therefore, it is a qualitative book based on case experience and technique. The authors explore various types of crime, giving a synopsis of the characteristics common to each type of criminal and how to stop the specified perpetrator. It does this by exploring victimology from a perpetrator's perspective. The authors argue that by understanding the criminal thought process one can circumvent victimization. By being aware of potential vulnerabilities, one can maximize self-protective measures.

This book is particularly useful because it offers practical and logical strategies to increase safety. Most of the criminals interviewed for this book suggest that they are actively trying to minimize the risk of being apprehended. As a result, the authors suggest that potential victims should yell for help and make a scene. By alerting others, the predator may have a significant likelihood of being apprehended and held accountable for the crime. Other suggestions the authors make include varying an individual's daily routine. This prevents a predator from becoming familiar with one's schedule, taking away the opportunity to attack a potentially vulnerable target (i.e., when he or she is home alone). Another useful strategy particularly relevant to parents and children was to incorporate role playing into safety planning. Through role playing, children have the opportunity to practice safety strategies. Most children know that they are supposed to yell loudly, run away, or tell a trusted adult. However, if a situation manifests, these techniques may feel foreign or uncomfortable to the child. Role playing allows them the opportunity to practice and become familiar with specific preventative strategies. By familiarizing children with these new strategies, it may arm them with more appropriate measures of how to ward off perceived dangerous individuals and situations.

The authors offer several other practical tips. For example, carrying a cell phone and leaving lights on in the house are suggested strategies to thwart criminals. However, some of the instructions given by the authors may be misguided. For example, the authors suggest that a single woman should leave work boots outside the door. This signals to would-be perpetrators that she does not live alone. More importantly, potential predators are led to believe that a man lives there. According to the authors, a masculine presence increases the likelihood of apprehension. Thus, criminals are deterred from perpetration.

This advice is problematic because known assailants commit the majority of sexual offenses (Snyder, 2000). Often times, the man who owns the boots is the criminal. It is also troublesome because it suggests that women must rely on men for their personal safety. This reinforces gender stereotypes that men are responsible for women's safety. Perhaps a more helpful suggestion could have centered on women's agency (similar to the suggestions of changing routines and keeping cell phones close by).

The combined fifty years of experience in law enforcement provided the authors with a substantial amount of knowledge. However, the manner in which a predator is defined is obscure. While acknowledging that the scientific literature still lacks a clear definition of what a predator is, the authors blur the line between "typical" perpetrators and uncommon predators. For example, in Chapter 5, Crimes against the Elderly, the authors retell the story of Terrence Adderly, a man who repeatedly sexually assaulted elderly women. Adderly committed these crimes by posing as a local resident in search of work. He offered to perform physical chores for elderly women (i.e., mowing the lawn). By presenting himself in a clean-cut, polite manner, the women were disarmed and willingly invited him into the house. Once inside, Adderly raped his vulnerable targets. This example suggests that predators are the criminals who are repetitive in their victimization, who are violent in their perpetration, and who are intentional in their exploitation of victim vulnerabilities.

However, contrast this example with the cases given in Chapter 7, Domestic Violence. Here, the authors discuss examples of mothers killing their children. The characteristics of these "predators" do not coincide with the traits of the predator in Chapter 5. For example, they describe these child killers as emotionally unstable, and the crimes as spontaneous. Furthermore, these "predators" were not repeat offenders given that there was only one homicidal incident.

It is acknowledged that predators, or criminals in general, are not a homogenous group, but a general definition of what a predator is remains unclear. All of these chapters offer a different implicit explanation of what a predator is. After reading this book, one should, at the very least, have a sense of what distinguishes a predator from a common criminal.

The authors state that the crimes demonstrated in this book tend to be uncharacteristic of common crimes. Moreover, their discussion of egregious and atypical cases induces unnecessary fear and perpetuates stereotypes. The authors argue that by reading this book, one can reduce victimization. Using uncommon situations may not be particularly helpful because it offers preparation for the unlikely. While the authors acknowledge the use of sensational cases to highlight worst case scenarios, their presentation maintains the myth of "stranger-danger" as the most likely situation. One particularly hazardous consequence of this is a false sense of security. Parents may be lead to believe that their children are adequately protected because they take preventative measures against stranger assailants. Attention is diverted from the likely offenders who are "relatives, friends, baby-sitters, [or] persons in position of authority..." (Durling, 2006, p. 327; see also Meloy, 2006; Quinn et al., 2004).

Because these types of perpetration are out of the ordinary, understanding these crimes does little to actually reduce victimization. The more likely result is an increase of fear. This, arguably, impacts women the most (Mesch, 2000; Stanko, 1995). Women who live in fear of

crime are likely to change their lives, alter their behaviors, and limit their activities (Stanko, 1995). However, these changes may not reduce victimization but may instead deter women from taking proactive and empowering measures to protect themselves (Stanko, 1995). It may have been helpful to include more common scenarios of violence and victimization. Including typical cases in addition to highlighting the unusual situations presented here may have given more useful strategies of self protection. For example, discussing violence among intimates could have led to strategies such as identifying the “red-flags” (i.e., emotional manipulation, social isolation, economic control) that could signal potential future victimization (Payne & Gainey, 2005).

Nevertheless, Cooper and King do an excellent job of debunking one specific stereotype. Repeatedly, the authors emphasize the fact that physical demeanor and characteristics do not determine criminality. These authors provide numerous examples of how perpetrators appear, look, and act “normal”. Because of these false perceptions, victims did not distinguish them from criminals and offered their trust. The point here underscores the age-old adage, “don’t judge a book by its cover.” Adderly, from Chapter 5 (Crimes against the Elderly), was clean cut and well-mannered. He charmed his victims into a false sense of security. Over and over again, the authors appropriately stress that perpetrators are not a homogenous group that can be easily identified.

In conclusion, *Predators* is beneficial because it provides specific strategies to reduce victimization. In addition, it provides an in depth look at the individuals who actually worked the cases. It allows us to have an appreciation for the selflessness of their actions and their dedication to keeping our society safe. This book is recommended to individuals who are interested in law enforcement experiences. As well, parents and single women may benefit from some of the practical recommendations.

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Correspondence concerning this review should be sent electronically to lrapp@udel.edu.